

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2618

INFO AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 0782

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB,TU

SUBJ: NEW PRESIDENT OF TURKISH CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (TURK-IS)

FOR S/IL

1. SUMMARY. THE DEATH OF TURK-IS PRESIDENT, SEYFI DEMIRSOY, IN MID-JANUARY AND THE FORMATION OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT, HEADED BY BULENT ECEVIT OF THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLES' PARTY (RPP) ON JANUARY 26, HAS COMPLICATED THE POLITICAL-LABOR SCENE. ECEVIT'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT WANTED A DELAY IN NAMING A SUCCESSOR TO DEMIRSOY TO GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO TRY TO TAKE OVER CONTROL OF TURK-IS AND TIE IT TO THE RPP. TURK-IS SECRETARY GENERAL, HALIL TUNC, AND ESTABLISHMENT LEADERS WANT TO RETAIN THE TURK-IS POLICY OF NON-INVOLVEMENT WITH POLITICAL PARTIES SO FORCEFULLY ADVOCATED BY DEMIRSOY. WHILE TUNC DID NOT WANT THE

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OFFICE OF PRESIDENT, HE WAS ELECTED BY THE TURK-IS

MANAGEMENT TO IT ON JANUARY 31, AND SEDEK SIDE (PRESIDENT OF THE SUGAR WORKERS UNION AND JUSTICE PARTY IN POLITICAL ORIENTATION) WAS NAMED TO BE SECRETARY GENERAL. TUNC WOULD HAVE PREFERRED A LESS CONTROVERSIAL CHANGE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE TURK-IS MANAGEMENT BOARD MET ON JANUARY 31 AND ELECTED TUNC TO REPLACE SEYFI DEMIRSOY. TUNC TOLD THE REGIONAL LABOR ATTACHE ON JANUARY 28 THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD HE NOW REPLACE DEMIRSOY. HE SAID HE HAD A NUMBER OF REASONS FOR HIS DECISION, BUT TWO STAND OUT: 1) ABOVE ALL HE DOES NOT DESIRE TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE HAD WANTED DEMIRSOY'S JOB, AND 2) WERE HE TO MOVE UP TO THE PRESIDENCY, THE PROBLEM OF FILLING THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S JOB COULD CAUSE A NASTY ROW IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT VERY SOON AFTER DEMIRSOY'S FUNERAL (JANUARY 19). TUNC SAID THAT HE WANTED OMER ERGUN (TURK-IS FINANCIAL SECRETARY) TO BE PRESIDENT, AND A MAN WIDELY ADMIRERD THROUGHOUT THE LABOR MOVEMENT; EVEN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS VOTED FOR HIM AT THE TURK-IS CONVENTION LAST MAY. THIS COMPROMISE VIEW PREVAILED THROUGHOUT, BUT ERGUN ADAMANTLY REFUSED TO CONSIDER THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT. OTHER CANDIDATES WERE RULED OUT FOR VARIOUS REASONS. SEDEK SCDE WAS SELECTED FOR SECRETARY GENERAL, AMONG OTHER REASONS AS THE LEAST CONTROVERSIAL POSSIBILITY AVAILABLE.

3. THE BATTLE TO WHICH TUNC ALLUDED CONCERNED NOT ONLY INDIVIDUALS WHO MIGHT HAVE DESIRED THE JOB, BUT WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WHO ARE NOW MORE DESIROUS THAN EVER IN TRYING TO TIE TURK-IS TO BULENT ECEVIT. WHILE ECEVIT FORMED A MAJORITY COALITION GOVERNMENT ONLY ON JANUARY 26, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ACTIVISTS ARE ALREADY THINKING IN TERMS OF THE NEXT ELECTION, PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE IS SOME FEELING THAT THE COALITION MIGHT NOT BE LONG-LIVED. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND RPP POLICY CALLS, ACCORDING TO LEADING SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, FOR LEGISLATION ON A GENERAL AMNESTY, FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, AND BALLOTING BY 18-YEAR OLDS AND ABSENTEE WORKERS ABROAD. ONCE SUCH LEGISLATION IS ADOPTED, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WILL BE READY

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FOR ELECTIONS, AS WELL AS FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION OF TURK-IS TO CONTEST THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP.

4. THUS, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS DID NOT WANT THE MANAGEMENT BOARD TO SELECT EITHER A NEW PRESIDENT OR SECRETARY GENERAL NOW. THEY WANTED TO DELAY THE SELECTIONS FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND THEN CONVENE AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION. NOW THAT THE BOARD HAS ACTED, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS BELIEVE THAT TUNC AS PRESIDENT

IS MORE VULNERABLE THAN ERGUN AND CAN MORE
EASILY BE REMOVED BY AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION. THE
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS MAY BE COUNTED ON TO KEEP THE
POSSIBILITY OF AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION UNDER PERIODIC
REVIEW. TIMING WILL BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS. THEY ARE ALREADY OBSERVING WITH CONSIDERABLE
CARE THE RESULTS OF LOCAL UNION ELECTIONS AS A MEANS
OF DETERMINING THEIR POTENTIAL OF WINNING DELEGATES TO SUCH
A CONVENTION. THEY ARE ALSO TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION
THAT THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT WITH ITS POPULIST ORIENTATION IN
THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS MIGHT COME UP WITH SOME LEGISLATION
OF BENEFIT TO LOW INCOME GROUPS AND WORKERS.

5. TUNC STATED TO THE REGIONAL LABOR ATTACHE THAT TURK-IS WILL
CONTINUE TO FOLLOW AN ABOVE-PARTY
POLICY AND IMPLIED THAT HE WAS READY TO TAKE
ON THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IF THEY WANTED TO CHANGE THIS
POLICY. HE SAID THEY SUFFERED A DEFEAT LAST MAY AND HE
SAID NO INDICATION THAT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAD GAINED
ADDITIONAL STRENGTH SINCE THEN. ON THE OTHER HAND, AS
THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS SEE IT, A MAJORITY OF DELEGATES AT
THE NEXT CONVENTION WILL BE RPP IN POLITICAL ORIENTATION,
A 60 PERCENT MAJORITY AT PRESENT AND WELL UP TO 80 PERCENT
THREE MONTHS FROM NOW. HOWEVER, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS
ARE NOT CERTAIN AT SUCH A CONVENTION THAT THE DELEGATES
WOULD AGREE TO OVERTHROW TURK-IS'S ABOVE-PARTY
POLICY, AND TIE THE ORGANIZATION TO THE RPP.

COMMENT: TUNC WILL NOW DOMINATE TURK-IS
AND HE IS NOT PRESENTLY PREPARED FOR TURK-IS TO GIVE UP ITS
POLICY OF NO DIRECT INVOLVEMENT WITH ANY OF THE POLITICAL
PARTIES. THUS, THERE MAY BE A CONTEST IN THE NEXT SEVERAL
MONTHS. PRIME MINISTER ECEVIT IS EXPECTED TO MOVE
RATHER QUICKLY TO APPEAL TO ORGANIZED WORKERS AND TO
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TRY TO WIN THEM OVER TO HIS PARTY. HE REPORTEDLY
CONSIDERS THIS VERY IMPORTANT, AND AS AN INDICATIONS SOME
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE SAID HE INTENDS TO BE HIS OWN
LABOR MINISTER ACTING THROUGH ONDER SAV.
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